Does Precipitation Affect Consumers’ Smoking Tendency?

Yinlong Zhang, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

Three studies are reported that investigate the impact of precipitation on consumers’ smoking tendency. A cross-country comparison on prevalence of adult smoking (Study 1a) indicated that a high precipitation level was associated with a high percentage of smokers at country level. A cross-state comparison within the U.S. (Study 1b) confirmed this relationship at state level. A follow-up survey of smokers confirmed this relationship again (Study 1c). Two additional experiments that manipulated imagined rainy weather conditions confirmed this relation further and also demonstrated that the effect of precipitation on smoking was mediated by negative mood, moderated by whether a person is a smoker or not (Study 2) and by hedonic versus utilitarian processing objectives (Study 3).

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Smoking consumption perhaps is the most striking example of a harmful pattern of consumer behavior. Yet, smoking consumption is still very common in developed markets, nearly 25% of the U.S. population smokes tobacco despite the well-known negative consequences (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997), and its usage seems to be getting increasingly higher in emerging markets (World Health Organization 2004).

Due to the health and social significance of smoking consumption, over the years academic attention has been paid to understand the determinants for smoking consumption tendency. Different literatures seem to emphasize the relative importance of different factors. For example, the economic literature has mostly stressed that economic factors such as prices as the most critical driver for smoking consumption. While the social psychology literature tends to recognize that psychological, and interpersonal social determinants are important in understanding the smoking consumption, the role of social environmental factors such as family or peer group has been demonstrated as extremely important determinants. But, the role of natural environment factors such as temperature or precipitation has not been systematically investigated. These factors arguably are the very important factor in explaining consumers’ consumption activities (Parker 1997), so the current research aims to offer an initial step to understand the impact of these factors in smoking consumption.

Starting with two secondary data sources, we show that measure of precipitation correlates significantly with percentage of adult smokers at both country and state levels, even after controlling for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives. This relationship was further confirmed with a survey on smokers for many plausible alternatives.

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